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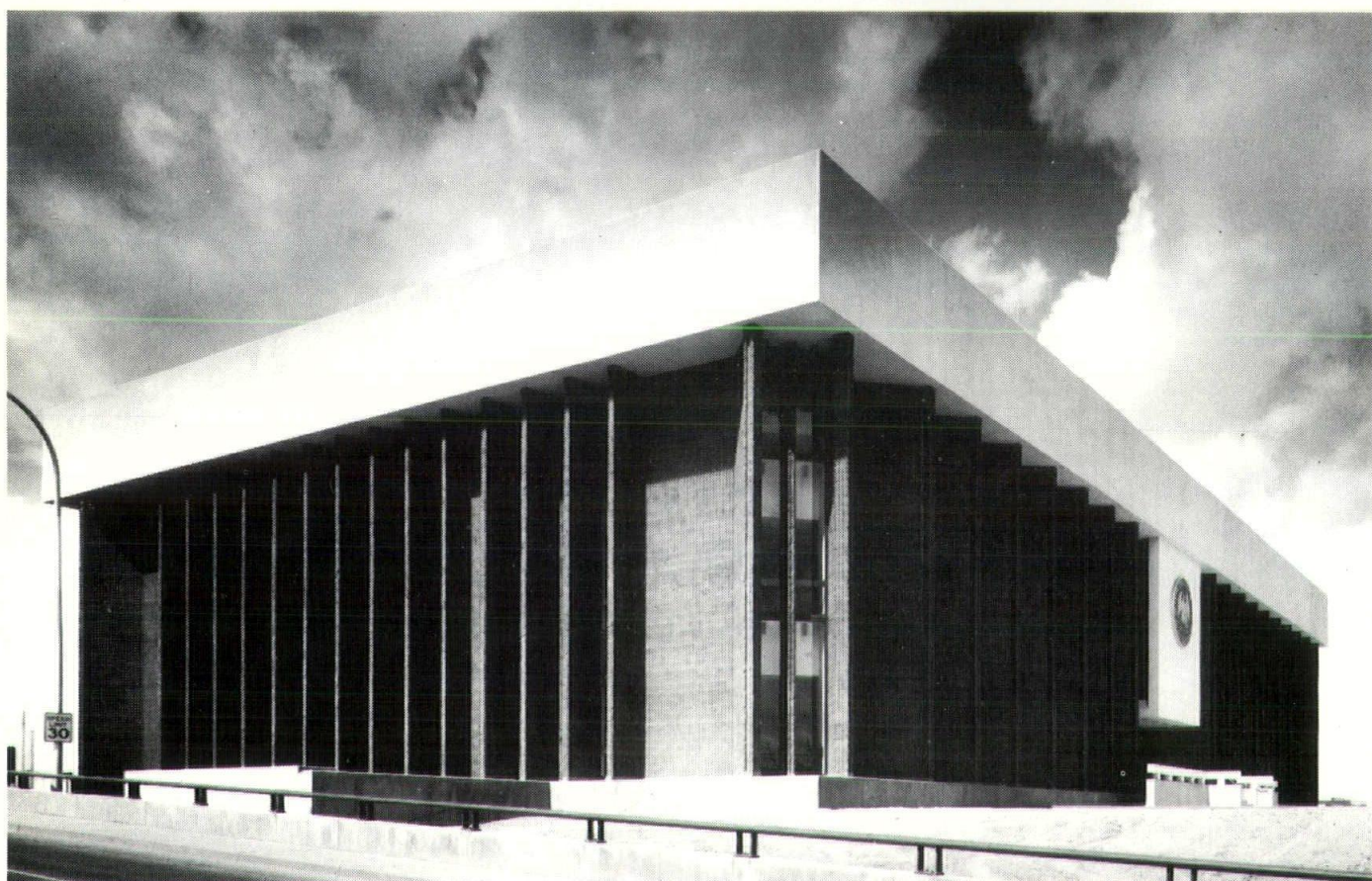
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THE MASONIC TEMPLE IN LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO

by Louise Harris Ivers

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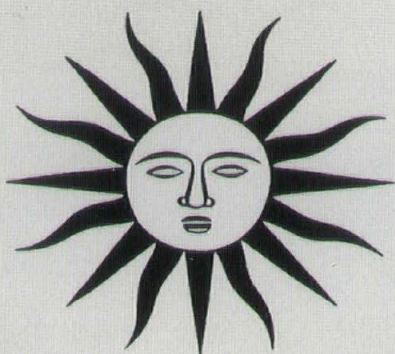
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vol. 18 no. 2

In this Issue—

Louise Harris Ivers continues to supply us with documentation on the historic buildings in Las Vegas, N. M. Beginning on page 9 is the architectural background of the Masonic Temple. Previously she has detailed the history of the Charles Ilfeld Building of 1890-91 (March/April 1970 **NMA**) and the Castaneda Hotel of 1897-1898 (May/June 1974 **NMA**).



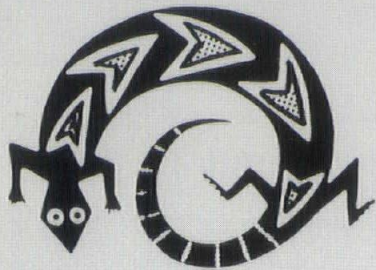
Coming—

Poland. Well beyond the expected deadline, the May/June issue will be my report on a fascinating trip to Poland to see their efforts and accomplishments in the world of historic preservation. The report is longer by far than anticipated, so the May/June issue will be thicker by many pages. I only hope that it doesn't bore you.

A CORRECTION

In the January/February 1976 issue of **NMA**, a mistake in contractor credit was made in the Crego Block Company Advertisement. The LEMBKE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY of Albuquerque should have been listed as the General Contractor.

JPC



nma

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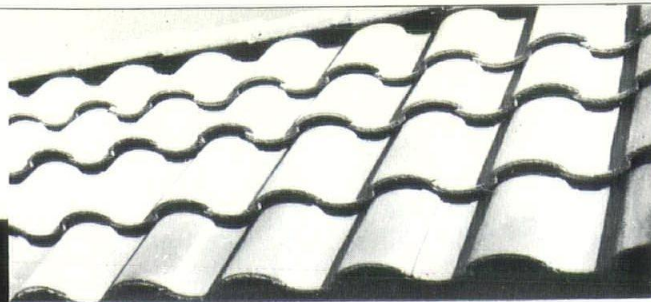
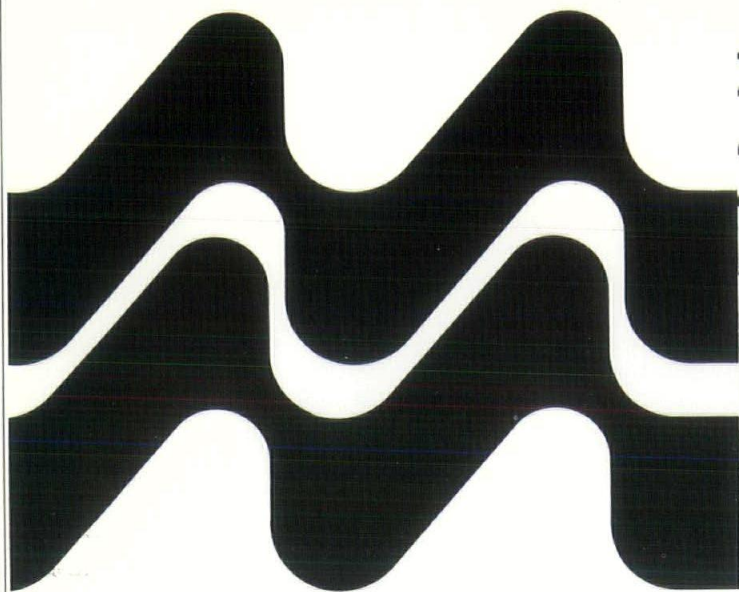
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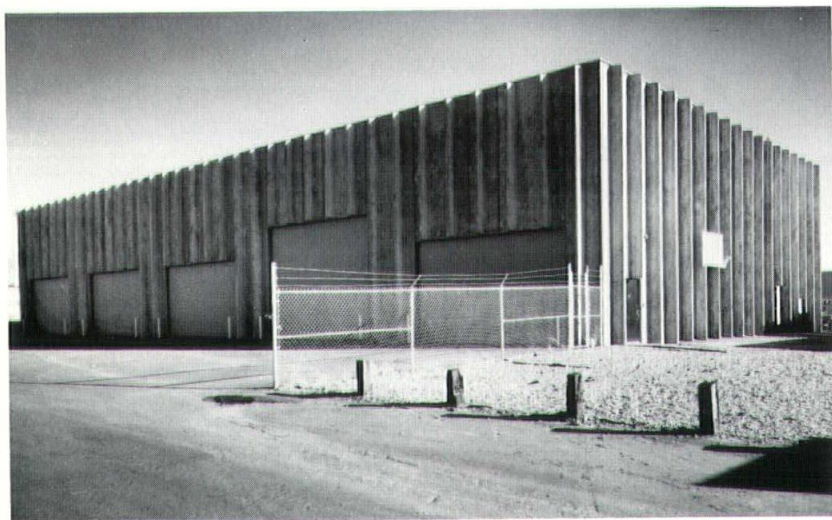
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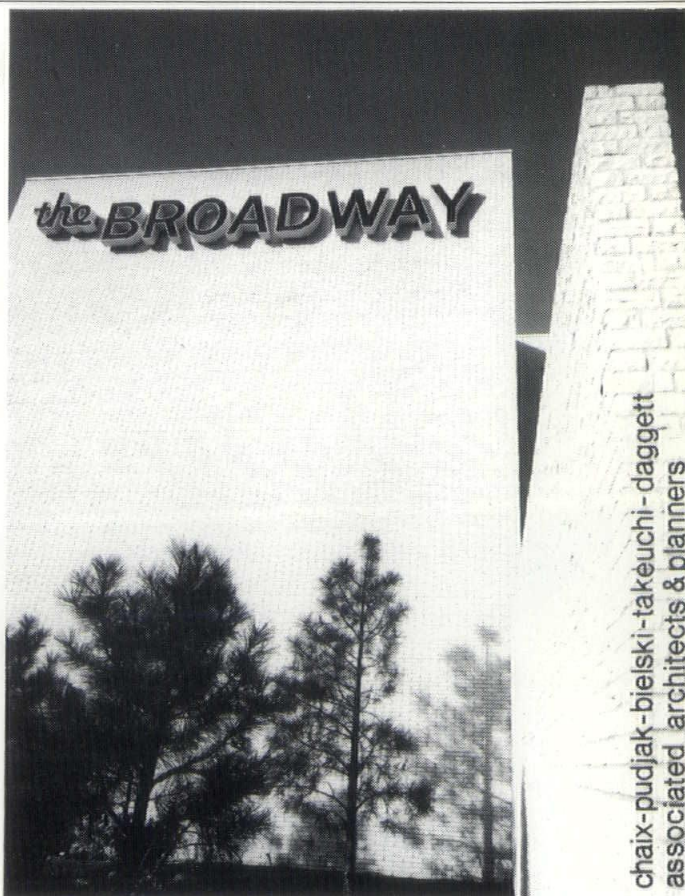
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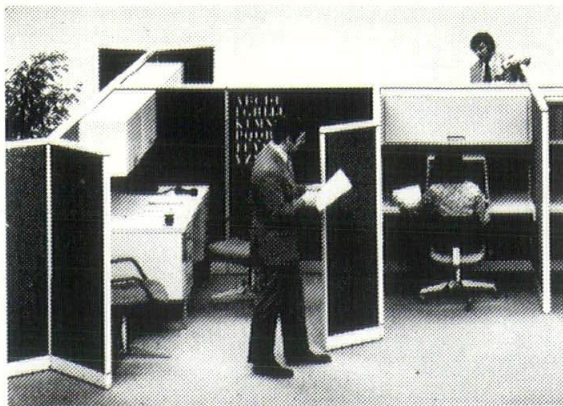
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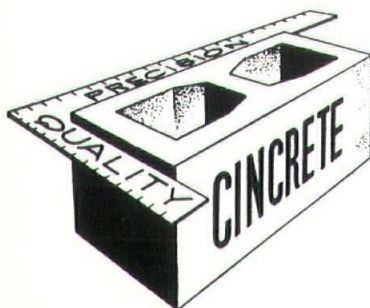
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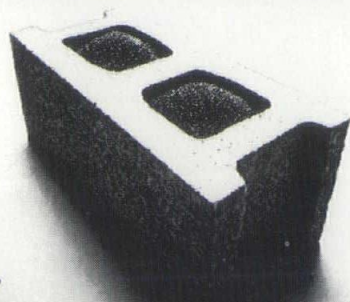
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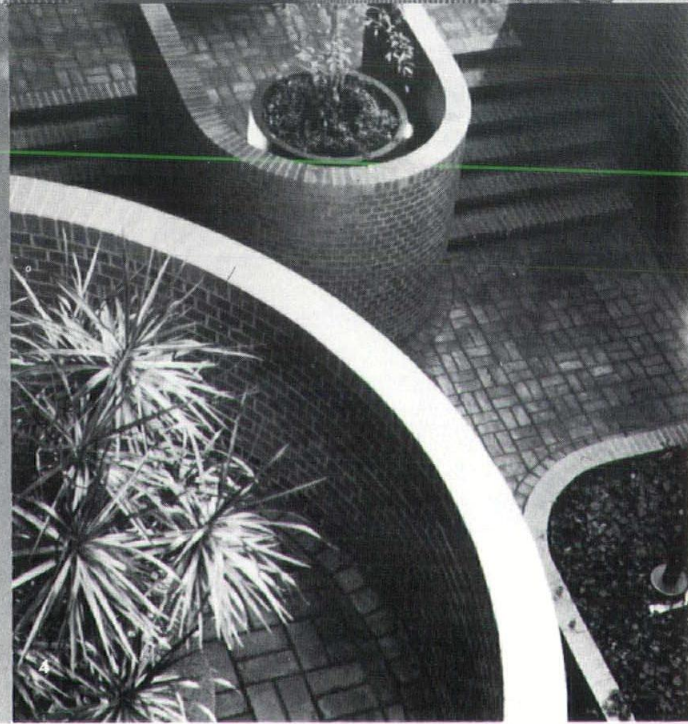
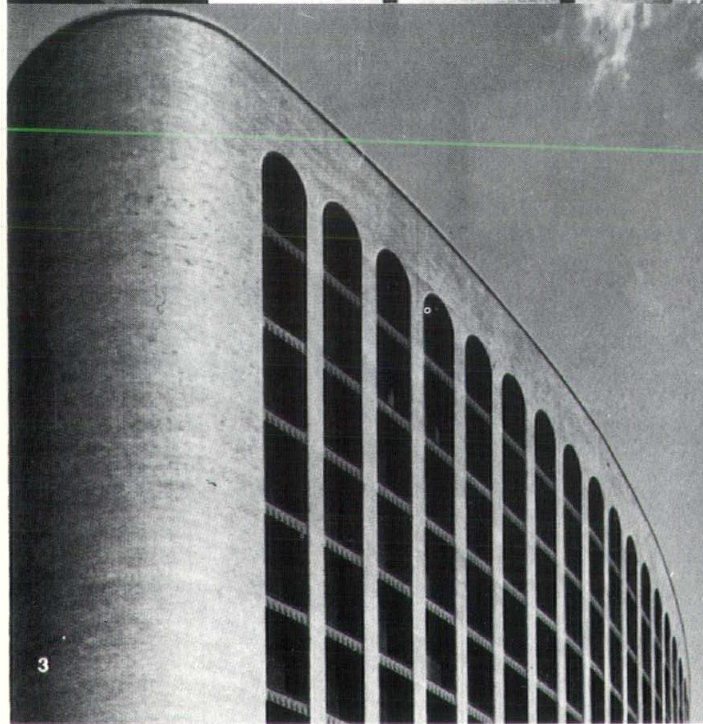
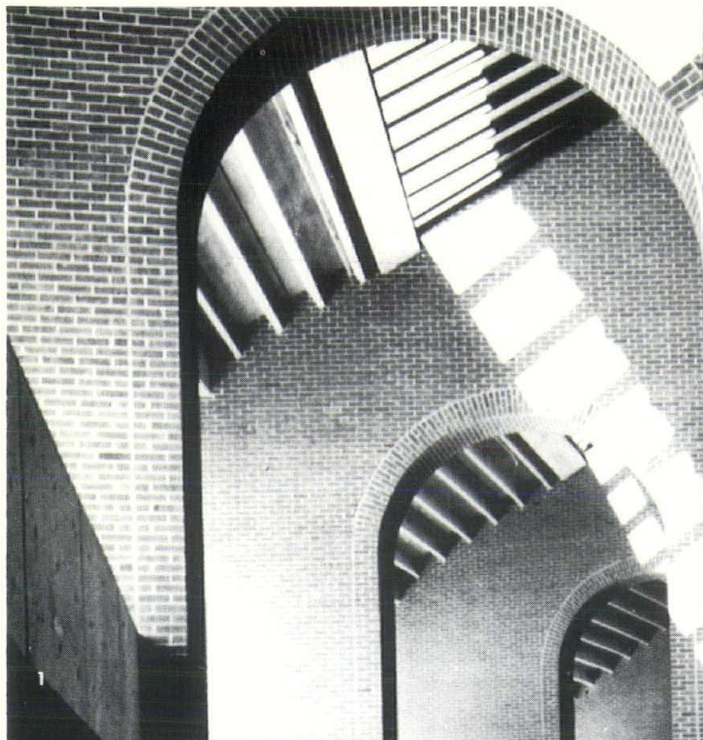
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LETTERS TO EDITOR

Editor,

I finished reading your editorial in the Nov./Dec. issue of N.M.A. and after wiping the tears from my eyes (too much unabashed laughter at a good joke) I decided to write to you to share the humor (rhymes with tumor).

A paradoxical statement is often funny so I thought I would start with the one that permeates your editorial. In a matter of fact way you mention that an Indian Museum, in some fashion, is being planned and will be built eventually. Your main topic appears to be that Mr. Owings and Company have not listened to nor asked for input from key historical committees and associations — regarding the Hewett House. I would like to inform you that the officials (some of whom are my relatives) at a large pueblo in New Mexico have had zero input in the development of an Indian Museum. In fact it is very rare for these associations, committees, and the Museum of New Mexico to get direct input or advise, or to take the simple step of informing the people most directly involved. Any statement to the contrary is pure bull. The Museum, associations and the committees prefer to rely on "professional" experts (they read Bandelier and Waters). I am reminded of the thief who called "foul" after another thief stole his previously stolen loot!

The next funny and misinformed statement in your editorial was the one that stated that you believed there were no alternate plans developed to include the Hewett House. In fact, more than one student architectural team at the University of New Mexico produced programs and phased design schemes that used the Hewett House as an integral part of museum development. These plans, including drawings and a color/sound film, were presented to the State Legislature in 1972/73 to help obtain initial funding for the Museum of New Mexico. Of course

they were only student architects from the University of New Mexico and it must have been a fluke that they were sensitive enough to include the Hewett House. Everyone knows that the University of New Mexico doesn't produce good architects anymore (or is it cheap labor?).

Funding (money), not the Hewett House, is really the key issue in this matter of architects. Protégés of the bush league master, J. G. Meem, sat waiting for the museum to get some (so fees could be paid). After the museum finally started to get major recognition and funding from the state (with professional help from "student architects"), two major leaguers, in the form of Mr. Owings and Mr. Barnes, came along. You wasted ink when stating that Barnes was an "out-of-state architect." The museum chose a qualified practicing architect and to do so they had to go "out-of-state." It is my understanding that Mr. Barnes chose an in-state architect that he felt was qualified enough to represent him in New Mexico.

Finally, in my opinion, publishing the fee paid to Mr. Barnes in your article (considering the tone of the piece) was extremely poor judgement and in bad taste. I realize that this bit of financial information was meant to stir-up the local yokels (that's the only thing that will do it). However, Mr. Conron, by doing so you have blown your cover of historical piety.

Sincerely yours,
Marc A. Giaccardo
Albuquerque, N. M.

□ □ □ □

Editor,

My copy of the December issue of *New Mexico Architecture* arrived, and gladdened me with a photograph of the Hewett House. What a surprise to read on, into your excellent editorial, to discover the building may be demolished.

Every time we return to Santa Fe, it seems more atmosphere has

leaked out. The destruction of the Hewett House certainly fulfills a sad pattern of cultural denial, and predicts that Santa Fe too can achieve the status of pop art. But this matter is too painful even to ridicule.

Please allow me to add my support for the preservation of the Hewett House. You are free to show this statement to anyone seriously interested in the people and future of Santa Fe. Both will be insulted and ignored by the disappearance of the Hewett House.

Sincerely yours,
Richard E. Ahlborn
Chairman
Department of
Cultural History
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C.
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□ □ □ □

Mr. Tibo Chavez, President
Board of Regents
Museum of New Mexico

Dear Mr. Chavez:

I would like to urge preservation of the Hewett House. It would appear that the house is worthy of its National Register listing and of every special consideration. In contrast, apparently, expansion of the museum is being considered in a haphazard way, without clear understanding of present and future needs.

Therefore, I would suggest "backing up" and doing some long range master planning for the Museum, much as Mr. Conron has suggested in the "New Mexico Architecture" magazine. A fundamental step could be to outline the objectives of the Museum as an institution; and I submit that one of these could be to preserve its own historic structures.

You will understand that I am entirely friendly to the Museum, but I believe better thinking needs to be employed.

Sincerely yours,
Jerold G. Widdison
Albuquerque, N. M.

LETTERS, CONTINUED

Editor:

There has been quite a lot of discussion about making public buildings at least easier for handicapped people to enter, leave and use. I'm not handicapped but I have a big gripe. Access ramps are fine, but huge, heavy doors make a mockery of the ramps. Examples?

Take a look at the doors on the Capitol Building! It practically takes a derrick to open the massive door, and for a woman (particularly one carrying a package) impossible. One tugs, grunts, cusses (very sedately of course) and waits for a big, strong male. The main door on the new hospital at Raton is much the same—beautiful but where is the electric eye if they are going to stress easy access? Try the State Library doors—huge, very lovely to look at, and with an arm load of books, impossible for the “senior” citizen. Sure, that's my category, even though I despise it. I've been a citizen all my life, why make me a senior just because I remember 50 years ago better than where I put my car keys last night? Supermarket electric eyes are wonderful—I can carry in my returnable soft drink bottles without a hassel and the market furnishes a boy to carry out purchases.

I know about wheelchairs, a little at least, for my aged mother is either in bed, or in a wheelchair twice a day. After a stroke she's hospitalized, and I wheel her through long halls, into the recreation and activity rooms, the elevator and sun room. Miner's Hospital (Raton) is old fashioned, but the human element is *not*. Their doors are not two stories high and architects should try pushing wheelchairs a few times before they put out designs. Looking lovely is nice, but not enough!

Sincerely,
Alice Bullock
Santa Fe, N. M.

MR. YUK AND THE NEW MEXICO POISON & DRUG CENTER

“He's gucky and yukky. Kid's don't like him—and that's the main idea,” says Dr. Diana F. Rodriguez Calvert, director of the New Mexico Poison, Drug Information and Medical Crisis Center.

The Center, assisted by local Optimist Clubs throughout New Mexico, is kicking off a major campaign to help parents keep their children from accidental poisonings. The focal point of their campaign will be “Mr. Yuk”—a bilious green round face with the corners of his mouth turned down, and his tongue sticking out.

Mr. Yuk stickers should be placed on anything in the house which children should stay out of. They should be taught that “Mr. Yuk is a no-no,” Dr. Calvert said.

The New Mexico Poison, Drug Information and Medical Crisis Center is located in the Bernalillo County Medical Center. Its activities are coordinated with the Emergency Medical Services Division of the New Mexico Health and Social Services Department, and the Center serves as an integral portion of the emergency medical communication system for the state of New Mexico.

Mr. Yuk stickers and posters may be obtained by contacting the Poison Center at BCMC, or any local Optimist.

Every Mr. Yuk sticker contains the free phone number of the New Mexico Poison Center: 1-800-432-6866. Within Albuquerque the local number is 843-2551, while out-

side of Albuquerque, residents may phone the center without charge, by dialing 1-800-432-6866.

The Center is open 24 hours, seven days a week—and is growing rapidly. In January, 1973, the Center received 67 calls—and in January, 1975, the Center received 706 calls. About two-thirds of the calls come from the public and the rest are from health professionals from all over the state.

Questions asked cover a wide area: drug overdoses, poisonings, and medical crises unrelated to drugs. Six pharmacists, speaking both English and Spanish, respond to all initial requests for assistance. Other specialists such as pediatrics, emergency medicine, burn, and trauma are readily available.

The New Mexico Poison Center is a part of the National Poison Center Network, which has given permission to use the Mr. Yuk symbol in this area.

The old “skull and crossbones” used in the past to identify poisons has been proven to have little meaning for children of today, since it is seen so often in cartoons and amusement parks to connote happy, exciting things. A testing program was developed to see which of six symbols a child would NOT want to play with—and the scowling green face was found least attractive. One child, declining to pick up the bottle, even named the new symbol when he declared: “He looks yukky!”

“We just want the people of New Mexico to know that if anyone—child or adult—has swallowed poison or other dangerous substance, the Center is here to help with immediate, accurate information about what to do and how to help,” Dr. Calvert said.

The Center also has readily available information on plants and insects which may be poisonous, and how to treat these problems. The Center is connected with the emergency rooms of all local hospitals, and with the national poison center for assistance with uncommon problems.





Figure 1.

THE MASONIC TEMPLE IN LAS VEGAS, N. M.

by Louise Harris Ivers

Many late nineteenth century buildings remain in Las Vegas, New Mexico. They are visible proof to us of the proliferation of architectural styles during the Gilded Age. In this period buildings were constructed in every imaginable historical style. Architects freely adapted the ancient structures of Europe and Asia to American commercial and domestic needs. One of the greatest of these architects, Henry Hobson Richardson, was inspired by the Romanesque churches of Spain and Syria, but he did not blindly copy them. Instead, his American buildings capture the sense of massiveness and grandeur inherent in typical Romanesque structures. Richardson adapted the Romanesque to his personal idiom by thoroughly digesting its forms and details, which he used in a manner that was fitting to his designs. In his buildings, decoration and structure are thoroughly integrated. Many other architects quickly grasped the

magnificence of Richardson's structures and began to imitate him, initiating an American style we call the Richardsonian Romanesque.

Most of Richardson's imitators skimmed the superficialities from the great man's style to design structures in which Richardson's essential power was not paralleled. However, there were exceptions to this rule, such as Louis Sullivan's Auditorium in Chicago. By 1875 Richardson had arrived at his mature style seen in Trinity Church in Boston and the Cheney Block (fig. 4) in Hartford, and by 1880 architects in provincial as well as in major centers were producing Richardsonian Romanesque buildings. Between 1880 and 1900 many of the more successful structures in this style appeared in the pages of *American Architect and Building News*. Characteristic of these designs are quarry-face masonry,

Continued page 16

heavy proportions, Syrian arches, prominent voussoirs, squat columns, and Salamanca towers.

The Masonic Temple (figs. 1, 5 and 8) in Las Vegas is a typical Richardsonian Romanesque building. In 1892 *The Commercial Club Illustrated Supplement to the Las Vegas Daily Optic* published a design by Kirchner and Kirchner, Denver architects, for the Temple (fig. 2). This design was for a Romanesque building with Gothic overtones. Its quarry-face stone, heavy piers, round arches, clustered colonettes, and turrets derive from the former style, while its sharply pitched roof and gables, cresting, and finials are of the latter. Kirchner and Kirchner's four story design was not constructed, however, and the contract for the Masonic Temple was eventually awarded to I. H. and W. M. Rapp, who at that time had offices in Chicago and Trinidad, Colorado. I. H. Rapp came to supervise the construction in Las Vegas which was executed by W. F. Kean of Pueblo, Colorado.¹ The cornerstone of the Temple was laid in November, 1894,² but the building was not finished until June, 1895.³ Its cost was about \$30,000, and its lot was an additional \$15,000.⁴

The Rapps' design, like that of the Kirchners, is Richardsonian Romanesque in character. In fact, it is remarkably similar to H. H. Richardson's Cheney Block (fig. 4) of 1875-76. Both structures have quarry-face masonry, heavy corner towers with pyramidal caps, indications of towers at the opposite corners, large round arches carried on massive piers linking two stories together, pronounced voussoirs, and arched entrances. The Masonic Temple is narrower, smaller, and simpler in design than the Cheney Block, but both buildings are weighty and massive in character. The Rapps, unlike many of Richardson's imitators, seem to have understood the master's feelings for proportion. A critic wrote in 1891 that

assuredly designers will get nothing but good from his [Richardson's] work if they learn from it to try for largeness and simplicity, to avoid niggling, and to consider first of all the disposition of their masses. But these are merits that cannot be transferred from a photograph. They are quite independent from a fondness for the Provencian Romanesque, and still more of an exaggeration of the depth of the voussoirs and of the dwarfishness of pillars.⁵

Although it would not be mistaken for one of Richardson's designs, the Las Vegas Masonic Temple has the "largeness and simplicity" that were the master's great qualities.

The entrance of the Masonic Temple (figs. 5 and 8) is a low Syrian arch carried on squat columns typical of the kind used by Richardson. Rapp and Rapp did not derive this entrance from the Cheney Block, however, but seemingly from Adler and Sullivan's Chicago Stock Exchange (fig. 3) of 1893-94. Although they lack the brilliant complexity of Sullivan's ornament, the curvilinear vegetal forms carved in low relief on the sandstone spandrels

above the entrance arch of the Temple are somewhat Sullivanesque in character. The disposition of this carving is an *alfiz* around the low Syrian arch, and the *tondi* with carved borders containing symbols in the spandrels of the Las Vegas Masonic Temple are similar to those of the Chicago Stock Exchange. However, the Stock Exchange arch rests on a low base immediately on the ground, while the Masonic Temple arch has a high base composed of more Sullivanesque vegetal ornament, squat columns, and rusticated blocks of red sandstone. At the corners of the bands of sinuous vegetal carvings are the heads of *putti* (fig. 8) intertwined with leaves. A competent stone carver undoubtedly created this decoration. Whether the Rapps imported an artisan or hired someone in the Las Vegas area to carve these blocks is unknown.

The Optic, still published daily in Las Vegas, described the three story Masonic Temple in 1895.

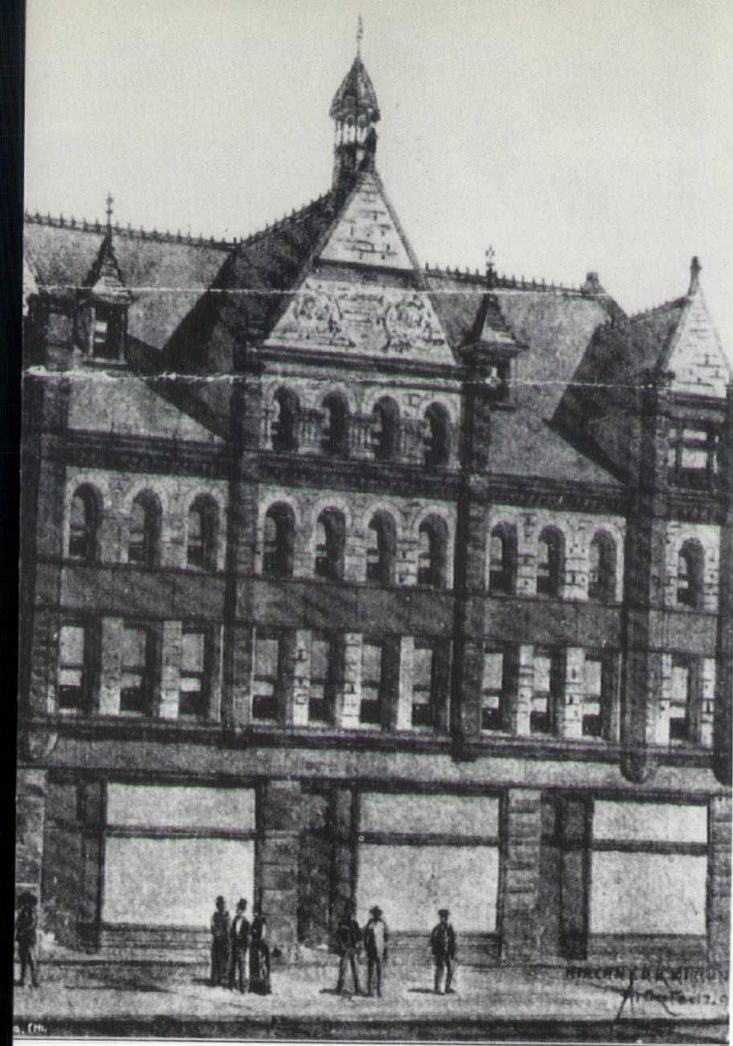
The building . . . has been erected of Las Vegas red sandstone . . . Its outer dimensions are seventy-five feet front by ninety feet of depth, there being five floors, including the basement and tower. The basement is divided into three rooms, underlying the entire structure, and is lighted by prismatic tiles in the vestibules to the stores and by three bulkhead windows in the rear. The heating apparatus for the building, is located in the basement.

In front of the Temple is the first cement sidewalk in Las Vegas. Broad and well built curbing of red sandstone, it furnishes a handsome approach to the three handsome store rooms occupying the ground floor . . . The ceilings [of the display windows] are of steel, and the fronts of red oak, the top of each window being chipped glass, while the remainder of the window is one solid sheet of American polished plate glass.⁶

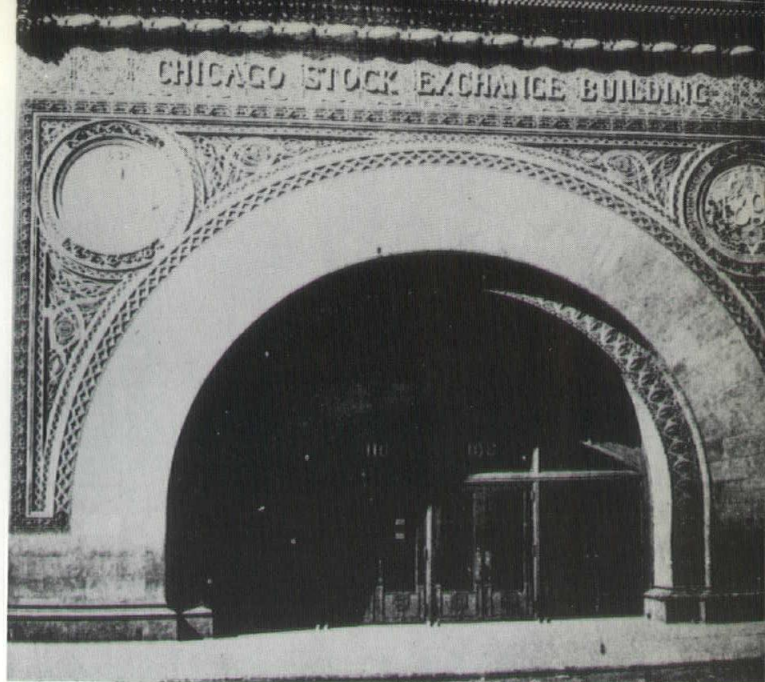
The display windows of the Temple seem to have remained intact. Carved wooden pilasters with beading and triglyph-like motifs support an entablature with a dentil cornice on each wall exposed by the windows. Arched mirrors with fan-like forms are set between these pilasters (figs. 6 and 7).

Inside, the Masonic Temple is rather spare and devoid of detail. What detailing exists is classical in form. For example, the newel posts of the tower staircase have recessed beaded panels, dentils, and leafy forms carved on them. Panels and dentils also appear around the entrance of the lobby, and still more panels and curvilinear carving are found on the staircase. Decorative turned balusters make up the stair railing. The only decoration in the upstairs rooms is around the doors and windows. *The Optic* described the interior of the Temple in exaggerated terms.

The grand entrance is in the tower . . . and is approached through a low massive arch of masonry, giving access to a lobby, ten and



▲ Figure 2. Las Vegas Masonic Temple design by Kirchner and Kirchner, 1892.



▲ Figure 3. Entrance, Chicago Stock Exchange, 1893 - 94.



Figure 4. Cheney Block, Hartford, Conn., 1875 - 76. ➡



Figure 5. Entrance to the Masonic Temple, Las Vegas.

Figures 6 and 7. The showcase and doors, Hoffman's clothing store.





Figure 8. Detail of the stone carvings, entrance to the Masonic Temple, Las Vegas.

NOTES

¹The Daily Optic, XVII, (June 24, 1895).

²Ibid., XVI, (November 26, 1894).

³Ibid., XVII, (June 24, 1895).

⁴Ibid.

⁵Montgomery Schuyler, "Glimpses of Western Architecture: Chicago," **American Architecture and Other Writings**, Edited by William H. Jordy and

Ralph Coe, (New York: Atheneum, 1964), 114.

⁶The Daily Optic, XVII, (June 24, 1895).

⁷Ibid.

⁸I. H. and W. M. Rapp are listed as having an office in the Crockett Block in Las Vegas in the 1900 and 1903 city directories.

⁹Examples are St. Anthony's Sanitarium of 1898, the Baca Avenue Public School of 1900, and the Y. M. C. A. building of 1905.

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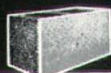
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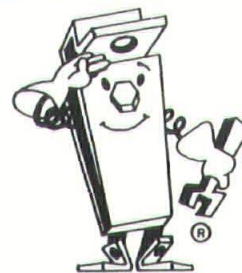
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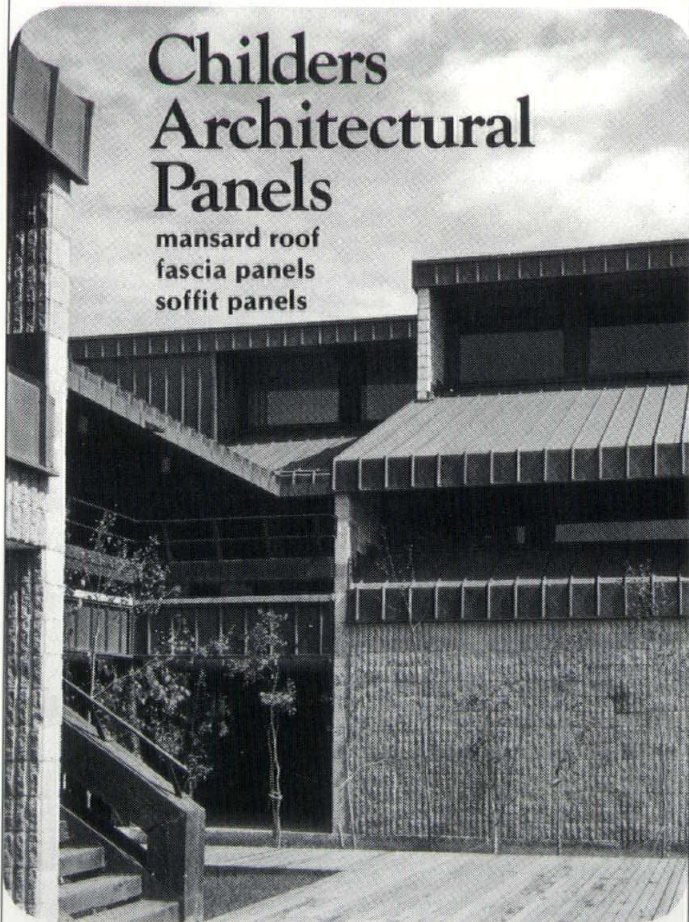
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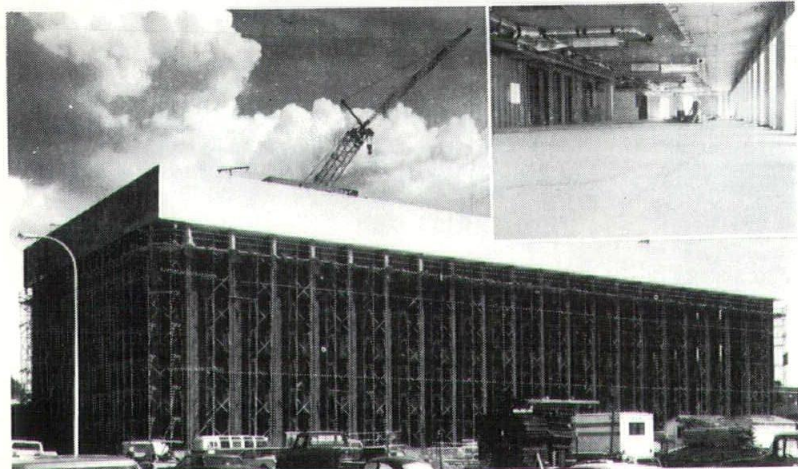
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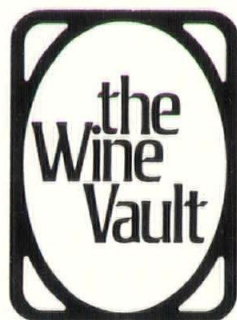
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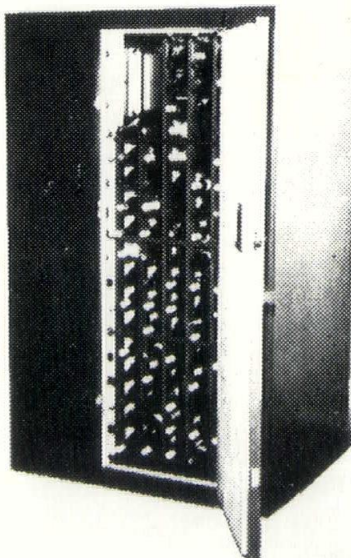
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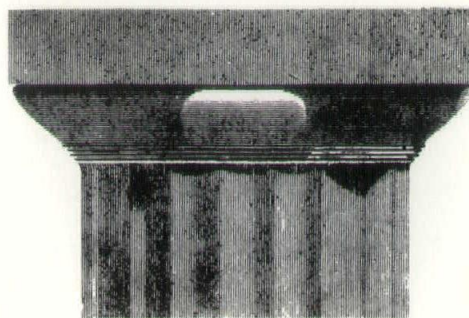
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